

COBBETT'S WEEKLY REGISTER.

VOL. 42.—No. 12.] LONDON, SATURDAY, JUNE 22, 1822. [Price 6d.

Published every Saturday Morning, at Six o'Clock.

TO THE
FREEHOLDERS
OF THE
COUNTY OF KENT.

*On their Petition for a Reduction
of the Interest of the Debt.*

Kensington, 20th June 1822.

GENTLEMEN,

OUR Petition, agreed to, at Maidstone, on the 11th instant, has made a greater stir in the Kingdom, than any other thing within my memory. It contained that which was well calculated to produce such effect; for, it prayed for "*a just reduction of the interest of the National Debt*," a prayer proposed by me, and adopted by you.

It was not to be expected, that such a proposition, and coming from so great, so opulent and so well-informed a part of the Kingdom, would fail to excite great attention, and to call forth bitter reproaches from all those whose interests were opposed to measures to be founded upon it. Such reproaches, from such quarters it has called forth. These reproaches have been rung in your ears; and more especially in mine, who have been called by all the vile names generally bestowed on constables by thieves. It seems necessary, therefore, that I defend myself; or, rather, that I defend my proposition: in doing which I must necessarily defend your conduct upon the occasion referred to.

The proposition has been said to have been suddenly and un-

Z

Printed and published by C. CLEMENT, No. 183, Fleet Street.

expectedly made ; that it took you by surprise ; that it was not the result of the reflection of the Meeting. I shall observe upon these assertions before I proceed to prove that the thing was just ; because, though the proposition was manifestly consonant with my own opinions, entertained for a great many years, I am aware, and very well aware, that those opinions derive their weight in this case from their having received your sanction and your adoption. It is very well known to you, then, that the petition, without the addition of this stinging clause, had been proposed by Mr. Foote, seconded by Mr. Rider, supported by my Lord Darnley, opposed by Sir E. Knatchbull, who had been answered by Mr. Larkin, and most ably and satisfactorily answered, too : you know that the thing was in this state, and the question about to be put upon the petition, when I offered myself to the notice of the Meeting. My reasoning was this : " You pray for reduction of taxes.

" It is unreasonable to pray for reduction of taxes, unless you tell the Ministers that you will support them in the measures necessary to enable them to reduce taxes. The *National Debt*, as it is vulgarly called (for the law calls it no such thing) demands, including expense of collection, expenses of management, and expenses of Sinking Fund, which is neither more nor less than so much money given to the fundholders annually ; all these demand *forty millions a-year*. The whole collection in Great Britain makes about sixty millions. The army is absolutely necessary to the collection of the taxes ; because, in such a state of taxation and such a state of suffering, it is impossible, consistently with the safety of the public peace, to go on without a large army. The Debt, therefore, is the chief cause of the army. It is the cause, too, of numerous other expensive establishments. Therefore, unless you say something

"that shall let the Minister see
 "that you will support him in
 "reducing the interest of the
 "Debt, it appears to me that your
 "prayer for the reduction of taxes
 "is unreasonable; and that the
 "blame you cast on him on ac-
 "count of the weight of taxes,
 "and on account of your own
 "acute sufferings is unjust."

This was the argument on which I founded my proposition; observing, however, at the same time, that you might not, perhaps, be ready, at that moment, to agree with me, but expressing my firm conviction that in six months' time you would be ready to agree with me; and, at any rate, declaring my determination to put your opinions to the test, by moving a specific proposition, praying for a reduction of the interest of the Debt. And here something took place, which none of my revilers have had the candour to notice. The moment I said that I would put your opinions to the test, that moment my voice was drowned by that immense Meeting crying out

"Move! Move! Move!" So that, the motion was yours, Gentlemen, much more than it was mine. I knew the power of misrepresentation; I knew the power of delusion; I knew all the arts that have been used for these purposes; but I over-rated their effects upon your minds. You understood the subject as well as I did; and it was I that was "*taken by surprise*," and not you. I was prepared and resolved to make my motion; but I was prepared with nothing written; and had to trust to my memory for the repeating of the proposition, so as to make it the same after discussion as it was when first delivered. It was I, therefore, I repeat, that was taken by surprise, and not the Meeting.

The Petition has been asserted not to have been the result of your *reflection*. It is well known to every man that was present, that the motion made to you by me occupied a *whole hour in discussion*; that what was going on was not only not talk for talk sake,

but real fact and argument. My Lord Darnley spoke twice upon the subject. His Lordship was answered in small part only by myself; but most completely by Mr. Larkin, who refuted, in my opinion, every argument and set aside every objection advanced against the proposition, which, as you well know, was finally carried in a way that may be fairly called unanimous; there being, out of the thousands of persons present, only three to hold up their hands against it. Our adversaries choose to forget, too, that Mr. Foote, the Mover of the original Petition, and Mr. Rider, the Seconder of that Petition, expressed openly and manfully, their readiness to adopt the clause proposed by me; and that Mr. Darrell, not perceiving Mr. Rider to be ready, rose even before him to second this proposition of Mr. Foote. The fact is, Gentlemen, that the proposition was not nearly so much mine as yours. It was a thing merely uttered by me. It emanated from your

thoughts and your conviction; and I ought to be considered, in this case, as merely your secretary or clerk.

These facts being notorious as they are throughout the County of Kent, it does seem to have required in Sir E. Knatchbull a considerable portion of that quality usually imputed to Irishmen, to tell the House of Commons, that nine-tenths of the people of Kent reprobated such a proposition; and it seems to have required something in Mr. Calcraft, something even beyond that possessed by Sir E. Knatchbull, to say, that if he had been at Maidstone, he would have made the proposer take his horse and get away home as fast as he could. I greatly question Mr. Calcraft's power to have opposed the proposition with half the effect that it was opposed by my Lord Darnley; and as to the assertion of Sir E. Knatchbull, the question put to him by Mr. Western was quite conclusive: “*Where were your nine-tenths on that day?*”

To be sure, where were his nine-tenths? He had some friends about him, at any rate; why did not those few friends hold up their hands? It is useless; it is a waste of time, to ask questions of such a nature. The fact is, that those friends, as well as himself, agreed with the proposition in their hearts, though for reasons sufficiently evident to persons conversant with the matter, they did not choose and do not choose openly to avow that agreement.

But, though it be so notorious; so perfectly indisputable that this Petition as thus amended, spoke the sense of the County of Kent, it does not follow that the petition was as indisputably *just in its prayer*. You are liable to err as well as other men; and, in order to prove that your prayer is right, it is not sufficient to say that it comes from your unanimous voice. Before we doubt, however, of the prayer being right, we might fairly demand of our adversaries to offer us something

like *argument*, in order to show that it is *wrong*. I offered arguments in support of the proposition; Lord Darnley offered arguments against it; Mr. Larkin answered those arguments by others; you were the judges in the case; and after, with most exemplary patience and decorum of behaviour, listening to the arguments of both sides, you decided that a *reduction of the interest of the Debt ought to take place*.

This was not only a regular mode of proceeding; but it showed that you *did reflect*; and it showed further, and beyond all question, that the subject propounded was one on which you had long reflected. At any rate, you did not decide till you had heard the arguments on both sides; nay, it having been suggested by Sir E. Knatchbull, that some persons had voted for the proposition *in mistake*, the proposition was deliberately put again, in order that nothing might be done without a clear understanding of it; and this produced, as you well

recollect, only three hands held up instead of the former six. This was real deliberation; here was every thing calculated to entitle the decision to respect. How do our adversaries proceed? They do not even profess to argue the case with us. They set up a cry of fraud, robbery, pillage, plunder; but, not an argument do they produce to substantiate the charges which they bring against us, while, as you will by-and-by see, they, by their own confessions, furnish arguments sufficiently conclusive against themselves.

We might, upon every fair principle of discussion, wait for their arguments when they shall find them, in answer to us; but this is what I shall not do. I made a proposition, which you did me the very great honour to adopt, and the way in which I shall show my sense of that honour, is to endeavour, by fair argument, to cover your adversaries with that shame and disgrace, which, without a shadow of proof they have dared to impute to you. I shall endea-

vor to show, Gentlemen, both the justice and the *necessity* of a reduction of the interest of the Debt. I shall not confine myself to a mere abstract view of the matter; and shall be willing to allow that, if the measure be not *expedient*; if it be not absolutely necessary to the safety of the country, it ought not to be adopted.

It is worthy of particular remark, before we go farther, that this proposition is nothing new. The justice of reducing the interest of the Debt, has several times been stated in the House of Commons itself. Mr. Curwen, Mr. Lockhart, my Lord Folkestone (who was one of the Noblemen who signed the Requisition under which you met;) these and several others have stated the thing in the House. Lord Milton, in a circular letter, on the subject of agricultural distress, has declared that there can be no efficient relief without a reduction of the Debt. "A Barrister" has written a pamphlet published by Mr. Ridgway to prove that the full

payment of the interest of the Debt is not binding according to any principles of law. The Rev. Richard Cruttwell, a Rector of the Church of England, has published several pamphlets at Mr. Hatchard's, bookseller of the late Queen of pious memory, and bookseller of Lord Liverpool and Mr. Wilberforce, in which Mr. Cruttwell insists on the justice and necessity of reducing the interest of the Debt. Nay, what was the motion of Mr. Western but for a very great reduction of that interest? Add to this, several petitions, presented to and received by the House of Commons, praying for such reduction; and particularly a Petition from the Hundred of Tapping in the County of Norfolk, not only praying for a reduction of the Debt, but for such a reduction as would bring down the taxes as nearly as possible to what they were in the year 1792, according to which these petitioners must have meant to take full two-thirds from the interest of the Debt.

How comes it that this petition did not call forth any of that talk and of these reproaches which have been bestowed upon your petition? This petition from the Hundred of Tapping was received without a single comment; and there it now stands quietly on the Journals of the House. Lord Castlereagh did not discover the same reason for receiving and printing that that he discovered for receiving and printing yours. He did not discover that it was good to receive it and print it as a *warning*, to other Hundreds and other Counties to take care how they "covered themselves with disgrace." The truth is, that the petitioners of Tapping only spoke the thoughts of a very great majority of the people of this kingdom; and that Lord Castlereagh knew very well; but he also knew that the petitioners of Tapping were a quiet unperceived body; that their petition and proceedings were things little heard of except in their own neighbourhood; that no report respecting them found

its way into the newspapers; that their petition was an air-gun; whereas yours was a barrel of great report, rattling through the whole cover and setting every animal in motion. This accounts for the difference in the treatment of these two petitions; and it ought to make you quite satisfied with your conduct at Maidstone; which you may be well assured will be an *example* and not a *warning* to the nation.

To return to the divers instances above-mentioned, which show that this proposition of yours was no novelty; I could add greatly to the number of *authorities*; but, it becomes us to take shelter under authorities of no description whatever. I have merely mentioned these authorities, to show the great and glaring inconsistency and total senselessness of our adversaries upon this occasion; but shall not content myself with resting upon authorities in any the smallest degree. If the justice of the proposition cannot be made manifest by argument, abandon it,

I pray you; rescind it, whenever Mr. Calcraft shall call upon you for that purpose in county meeting. But, if on argument its justice stand, there uphold it in spite of all the noise and nonsense that hypocrites can suggest and fools bellow forth.

In order to show the justice of the proposition, we ought, first, to get, if we can, at something like a clear idea of the thing called the National Debt. That mixture of knavery and folly which make up the stock-jobbing mind, would fain have us believe, that the National Debt resembles, in all respects, a debt due from one man to another for value received. This idea is very industriously inculcated, partly because it is familiar to every mind, and partly because it tends to deceive, and to perpetuate the commission of fraud. The dissimilarity between public debts and private debts would be manifest enough, if we were but to look at the motives by which men rely for security in the two cases. But, if we were

to adopt their notion of similarity, even that would fail them. For, what can the private creditor do to his debtor? He can only go *so far*, and no farther in the way of exacting his due. He can, indeed, take from the debtor his property; but he cannot take from him the future use of his limbs or his mind. He is compelled to leave him, after all, much the better part of his possessions; whereas these public creditors as they call themselves, would take from the nation at large its very means of existing in community such as it has heretofore existed. They would take from the nation the means of internal peace, and of providing, in peace, for war. They would leave it exposed in the hour of danger, not only to invasion but to subjugation. They would overturn every thing. They would destroy the very faculties of the nation; and this is what the private creditor is by no means permitted to do with regard to his debtor.

When one party makes a de-

mand upon another party for the payment of any thing, there is not only the sum to be ascertained; but, if necessary, the origin of the debt and the nature of the contract. If it could be proved or pretended that each person who calls himself a creditor of the nation had actually brought the sum which he pretends is due to him; had actually brought it, in good and lawful money, and put it into the hands of the Government; if there were only the slightest pretence for asserting this, then I should say, that it was a question of more difficulty; then I should say, that this thing called "Funded Property" stands somewhat nearly upon a level with property in house and land. But, is it not notorious, that the thing called a *Loan* has never, and particularly of late years, borne the slightest resemblance to a transaction of this sort. Look at the thing in gross. There are *eight hundred millions of money*, due, they say, to the fundholders, and for this we are paying them interest. Has

all this money been lent to the Government? To be lent, it must be possessed. Eight hundred millions of money is twice as much, at this moment, as all the lands, houses, woods and waters in the King's European dominions would sell for if they were put up at auction. Where, then, did this money *come from?* Can any one but an ideot believe that so much money was ever brought and delivered to the Government?

A loan was not the bringing of money to the Government: it was the writing of a name that constituted the loan in the first instance. Then came a shuffling about of the paper-money; and after the bonuses, discounts and allowances of one kind and another, the thing amounted to little more than the lending of the gains arising from the various workings of the thing. I have once before described this matter; but I repeat, that it was common to let newspaper editors and clerks in offices have what was called a *slice of a loan*. I was asked just after my first re-

turn from America, by persons very conversant with the matter, why I, as a loyal writer, did not ask for a slice of the loan. Now, what money had I to lend to the Government? Yet, I should certainly *have got* some money by this slice; and, out of whose pockets was the money finally to come? It is recorded in the laws; in the Acts of Parliament, that the heaven-born minister, Pitt, lent the loan-contractors, Boyd and Benfield (who were Members of Parliament at the same time,) a sum of the public money, to enable them to make good an instalment upon a loan made by them to that very public; that he lent them this money without interest, while the public was paying them or paying the scrip-holders interest for the whole of the loan, this part of it as well as the rest! This transaction came out by accidental detection, many years after it took place; and, Act 78 of the 45th year of the reign of the late King was an Act to indemnify Pitt that is to say, to *screen and protect*

him for having unlawfully lent the public money to loan-makers without interest while the nation was charged with interest upon this very sum. At the same time it was discovered, and by accident also, that when the "loyalty loan" was raised, ten thousand pounds of it was lent by Dundas out of the nation's own money, deposited in his hands as Treasurer of the Navy. These facts are notorious; they are upon record on the Journals of the House of Commons itself; and if these things could take place and could come to light almost by miracle, what are we to suppose was going on throughout the whole of the period of the last thirty years of borrowing, while, pray bear in mind, twelve hundred millions of money were actually raised upon us in taxes?

When we take the magnitude of the sum pretended to be now due into view, we must be convinced that there is no source from whence it can have come except that of the taxes themselves; and this is the source and the only

source. Bonusses, discounts, allowances, charges of management, and the rollings over of interest, which made the Government borrow, in fact, the nation's own money over and over again; these account; and nothing else can account, for the nation having had lent to it what they call eight hundred millions of money, while the fee-simple of its soil is not worth half the sum, I put the case as I put it once before; if a mere common shopkeeper were to go into a court and swear that he had lent his rich neighbour half a million of money, would not a jury decide at once that the demand was unjust and ascribe it to madness? And is the demand of eight hundred millions of money; is the demand of a sum double in amount to the worth of the fee-simple of the land; is such a demand, on the part of *any* body, to be seriously listened to and reasoned about? However, bearing in mind this real character of the thing, let us, for argument's sake (and merely for argument's sake)

suppose all the money to have been really brought and *put down to the Government*. This is what no man in his senses *can* believe, and it is what none but a knave will *pretend* to believe: but, merely for the sake of argument; for the sake of coming fairly at our opponents and grappling with them in their own way, let us suppose it to be so. The object of our enquiry, in this narrow view of the matter, is, whether the Jews do not now receive a *larger interest than they ought to receive?*

It is perfectly well known that the prices of the produce of the land are not now more than a third of what they were for many years before 1815, during which years the greater part of the debt was contracted. It is usual to admit that the depreciation of the money began with the Bank-stoppage in the year 1797; but it began, in fact, in the year 1793. Now, then, taking it in round numbers, two hundred millions of the debt were contracted before 1793, and six hundred millions

between that year and the year 1815. If you take two-and-twenty years before the depreciation began, and see the price of wheat during that period, and then take two-and-twenty years after the depreciation began, you will find that the price of wheat during that period was much higher, more than double what it was during the former period; and you will also find that the price of wheat now is come down to what it was during the latter part, at any rate, of that former period. During the first period, those who lent money to the Government, supposing, for argument's sake, that it was a real lending of money, lent it the worth of *four bushels and a half of wheat*, or thereabouts, under the name of a pound. Those who leant it money, during the second period, lent it about *a bushel and three quarters* of wheat under the name of a pound. If any persons had to lend it money now, they would have to lend it about *four bushels and a quarter* of wheat under the name

of a pound. Consequently, if we had to *pay off* the Jews, and if the Government were to insist upon our paying off in the present money, we should have to give those who lent the six hundred millions *four bushels and a quarter of wheat* for every *bushel and three quarters* that they lent! And, this is what they call *national faith* and *national honour!* This is the monstrous iniquity, for protesting against which; for endeavouring to procure a mitigation of which, your own Member, and I might say your own members, have had the confidence to charge you with incurring the just reprobation of all honest men!

Those who lent their money before the year 1793; these it will be said, stand on a *different footing* from the others. In the first place, I should be disposed to question their claim to any preference at all; because I found a dispute on the very nature of the transaction; but I have conceded that for the sake of argument; and according to this concession, I

should say, that if those who lent their money previous to 1793, could be *ascertained*; if they could be distinguished from the others; if the others had not long ago bought them out with depreciated money; if the transmutation were not necessarily almost as complete as that of hay and oats when turned into manure; if this were not the case, I should say that a distinction ought to be made; that the payment ought to be in proportion to the worth of the thing lent; and that the man who lent *four bushels and a half* of wheat, ought to receive a great deal more in payment than a man that lent only a *bushel and three quarters*. And so you say, too, for you pray for a *just* reduction of the National Debt; and not an indiscriminating, which would manifestly be an *unjust* reduction. But, if it be just to pay the lenders of the six hundred millions at the present rate; if it be just to pay those *four bushels and a quarter* of wheat that lent but *one bushel and three quarters*, what mon-

strous injustice is it to yield no more than the same payment to those that lent the four bushels and a half; and then, again, if we are only acting honestly now, in giving *four bushels and a quarter* in payment for a *bushel and three quarters*, let the world be astounded at our roguery in paying, as we did, in a bushel and three quarters from 1798 to 1814?

Thus, then, even supposing the lending of the money to have been a real lending; even leaving out of view all the possible transactions like those of Boyd and Benfield with Pitt and of Dundas; even supposing eight hundred millions of money to have been really bought and paid down to the Government: it is clear that the lenders of the six hundred millions have an equitable claim to no more than a bushel and three quarters of wheat instead of the four bushels and a quarter that they now receive. We are told that they have *law* for it; and that it was a *bargain* made with them. And these words *law* and

bargain and *sacred contract* and *good faith* and *national honour* and the like, are rung upon as ringers ring changes upon bells. But, to come to plain common sense and sincerity, was a bargain ever made with these people to give them four bushels and a quarter of wheat for a bushel and three quarters? If it were so, why do they not, as Mr. Lockhart says, show us the Act of Parliament for it? And even then, as to their having *law* for it, there are many laws about many things; but we know well, that nothing in the shape of law may not be altered or repealed. We have seen laws enough, and of much more ancient standing than these laws about the Debt, and about ten million times more sacred, not only suspended but set aside; but these laws about the Jews are, they would have us believe, like those of the Medes and Persians, which change not. You do not propose by your Petition that any thing should be done *without law*; on the contrary you *pray for a law*,

and these are people to call you robbers and plunderers because you want a law to prevent you from giving any longer four bushels and a quarter of wheat for a bushel and three quarters ; and to prevent the labouring man's child in the cradle from having more than half its labour mortgaged to Jews and jobbers.

We have seen that the transmutation of the claims of those, who lent their money before 1793, must have been such as to have thrown ninety-nine hundredths of any loss, that might have been sustained by the fundholders, upon persons who are not now fundholders ; but, besides this, there is one thing, common to every class of the fund-tribe, which all the calculators of claims seem to overlook. They seem to forget that upwards of three hundred millions have already been paid to the fundholders under the name of Sinking Fund. This hing, which has been a complete humbug with regard to the nation, has been something perfectly solid as

to the Jews. It has been an enormous sum of money raised yearly in taxes to be carried to Change Alley and there to be laid out in *weekly* sums in order to make the stock of the fundholders *constantly saleable at a good price*. What is this but so much money paid them over and above their interest ? What would people think of raising ten or fifteen millions of taxes in a year to be laid out in the purchasing up of house and land ? Why, they would say what was said the other day about the corn-pawning project, and that was, that it was just so much of the public money intended to be given to the landlords and farmers, only with this difference, that the corn-pawning project would not have been half so advantageous to the landlords and farmers as the Sinking Fund has been to the fundholders. Suppose (and, indeed, they often assert it), that these Jews have a *mortgage* upon the land. It is a comfortable reflection for a landlord, to be sure ; especially if their

tenure be, as Lord Castlereagh asserts it to be, as good as that of the Duke of Bedford to his estate : but, suppose them to have this mortgage at five per cent. have they a right to any more ? Have they a right to have three hundred millions laid out in purchasing up their mortgages, in order to give them double security ? If they have the mortgage, these three hundred thousand pounds have been paid off ; they have got these, at any rate ; and in common justice, even according to their own impudent demands of four bushels and a quarter instead of a bushel and three quarters ; even according to this impudent account they have but five hundred millions due to them. An account more impudent certainly never was brought to lord by London tradesman who spends his Sunday morning (after prayers) in turning the noughts of his bill into sixes and into nines. Let it be a mortgage, since Lord Castlereagh will have it so ; but let him then, find us, in the history of the whole

world, a fund raised out of the taxes of any country, to provide for mortgagees a constant mart whereon to dispose of their mortgages.

These, therefore, are three hundred millions already paid to the fundholders, over and above their interest. Now, according to their own showing ; according to Mr. Muschett's showing ; according to the Edinburgh Reviewers ; taking the transaction to have been an honest transaction from the beginning ; even in this view of the matter and on their own showing, taking in the pretended losses of the old fundholder, and taking, too, the standard of Mr. Ricardo in place of the standard of the bushels of wheat ; making all these allowances and admissions, they themselves say, that, up to this time, setting one thing against another (leaving out the three hundred millions, mind,) and then, up to this time, they say that the account is pretty fairly balanced, and, that which the fundholder has recently

gained being set against what he lost before, things are much about what they ought to be. It would be lucky, indeed, if such a blundering government produced no mischief; if chopping and changing the value of money produced no mischief, it would be a wonderful spectacle for the world to behold. However, if the account be fairly balanced *up to this day*, your prayer comes in precisely the nick of time; for it is not mad enough to refer to the past; and only asks protection for the future. It is monstrously false to say that the fundholders have not been overpaid up to this day; but of that you say nothing: you only want to be protected for the future; and is there any man hardy enough to tell you that because you have been paying four bushels and a quarter of wheat for one and three quarters for some time, you are to continue to do that *for ever*, and that, too, at the same time that he allows that up to this day the account is fairly settled? There might be some reason for

saying, *hitherto*, that the nation ought to pay four bushels and a quarter of wheat for one bushel and three quarters, on account of the one and three quarters which it paid to certain fundholders for some years, instead of four bushels and a half. It is a pretty way of doing *justice*, to be sure, to pay those who lent the six hundred millions three times as much as is their due, because those who lent the two hundred millions received less than their due: this gives us a pretty neat idea of what *national faith* and *national honour* mean. But, at any rate, our censurers themselves agree, that up to this day, justice has been done. What reason could there be, then, for continuing to pay the four bushels and a quarter for a bushel and three quarters; and, which is the robber, which is the plunderer, which is guilty of breach of faith, he who prays to be relieved from paying four bushels and a quarter for one bushel and three quarters; or he who wishes to hold him to

the letter of the law and squeeze from him the last drop of his blood; he who stands with his bond in one hand and the sharp knife in the other, the water from his mouth moistening his beard, ready to make the incision and take the pound of flesh? Even Mr. Ricardo, in answer to Sir Francis Burdett, said, that, upon the whole, it was a question with him whether the fundholder had gained or lost. But if this was a question with him, can it be a question with any honest man, whether the fundholder ought to continue to gain for ever? And whether the children's children of Englishmen ought to toil like slaves and live on the crusts that fall from the table of these pampered Israelites, or Israelitish Christians?

Your Petition prays that this injustice may be put an end to; and in praying for that you pray for the preservation of your country as well as for yourselves and families. It is clear that, without this reduction, the very least

evil that could happen is a total change of society in England. It is clear that there must be a breaking up of the present race of farmers; that a breaking up of the present race of landlords will speedily follow; and that, at last, a convulsion of some sort or other must come. Some of the stupid men in London have drawn out their forces; have said that the fundholders are more numerous than those connected with the land. They forget that the whole nation are connected with the land. They forget that all the landlords, all the farmers, all the traders, artisans and labourers have the foundation of their prosperity in the land and no where else. The debt is a night-mare that is pressing down the dreaming nation, which has only to give a fling, and the evil is removed; and to you, Men of Kent, the nation will be indebted for having begun to give this fling:

It is curious to observe the predicament in which the most noisy of our censurers have placed them-

selves. At the Meeting, Sir E. Knatchbull (without being called upon for it), *before my proposition was made*, you will observe ; before that, which is very material to observe ; before he could have had any suspicion of such a proposition being made, he must needs talk about the National Debt, and tell you that we ought to pay to the *last extremity*. Now, what could have induced him to do this ? Nobody asked him for it. How came he to think of it ? Did you ever hear a man who owed money, and who had not the smallest thought about not paying it; did you ever hear such a man come out with an uncalled for declaration that he would pay to the last extremity ? If you were to meet a banker in the street, and he were to tell you, without any question being put to him by you, that he was resolved to pay to the last extremity, should you not begin to feel in your pockets to find if you had got any of his notes ? And if you had any, should you not leave him stand-

ing in the street and run away to get them changed, for fear the last extremity should come before you got them there ? Words are merely thoughts put into sounds ; and there must have been some thought about *not paying* the full amount of the Debt passing in Sir Edward Knatchbull's mind ; he must have thought something about *an end* to the payment, before he talked of the *last extremity*. In the House itself they have got "*overwhelming necessity*." Now, according to my opinion, the overwhelming necessity is come. There are divers stages in every evil ; but we are not to stop till the evil is arrived at its last stage before we apply a remedy. We are not to stop here in England till people shall be dying in the streets and on the highway from starvation ; for, let it be observed, there will be no sister-kingdom to relieve us. If, owing to this debt, only one single farmer and his family be brought to the parish, that alone constitutes, in my view of the

matter, the overwhelming necessity. We stop a flood, if we stop it at all, at its commencement; when it has overflowed us we have no power, and we are destroyed. If we mean to rescue ourselves from insupportable pressure, we must not stop till we are overwhelmed and crushed; but must make use of our power to turn aside the weight while we are able. The "education of the country," therefore, which talks about stopping to pay when the "overwhelming necessity" shall have arrived, talks nonsense. There is no meaning in the words; but, we discover, through the whole of this censure from our opponents, a thorough conviction at the bottom of their hearts, that the day must come, and that that day is not distant, when a considerable part of this debt can no longer be paid. Not a word did they say against the Petition of the *Hundred of Tapping* in Norfolk. The same sentiments have been expressed upon many former occasions, without

calling forth, any censure at all; and therefore I pray you be not discouraged by the vehemence of the censure bestowed upon you. It will not be the first time if this vehement censure should lead, and speedily too, to the adoption of the very thing which has been the subject of the censure.

We have been accused of *desperate* notions. Pray was it a desperate notion that induced Mr. Ricardo to propose to *seize on the land* in order to pay off the Debt? This was modest, I suppose. And the gentleman was quite calm when he made the proposition. To my utter astonishment the landlords heard that proposition without resenting it; and yet, one of your Members has found brass sufficient to accuse you of adopting a dishonest proposition because you would step in and prevent the execution of projects like this. He does not pretend; and none of them pretend that the interest of the debt can continue to be paid for ever. They all of them contemplate a state of things

that may put a total stop to the payment. Lord John Russell, being hard pressed, supposed the case of war and invasion. Why should these justify a cessation of the payment of the interest, if the ruin of farmers and traders and the starvation of labourers are not sufficient to justify it. Are war and invasion and even conquest worse than general beggary and starvation? I should like to hear the answer that Lord John would get from a farmer to whom he should say: "the debt *will* make "you a beggar without war, invasion and conquest; war, invasion "and conquest *may* make you a "beggar;" which would you like best? The answer is upon the lips of every man that shall do me the honour to read this paper. For, where is the man, except he be a born ideot, that will not prefer the mere chance to the certainty of ruin. This leads us to another and larger and more terrific view of the consequences of this all-corrupting, all-corroding, all-crippling and all-ruining debt.

Well have the petitioners of the Hundred of Tapping in Norfolk called it a millstone dragging down the British nation; for, it is dragging us down, and down we are going at a greater rate than nation ever yet fell! Are we secure from the hostility of our neighbours? Yet it may now be said of England, that she dare not think of war; that she dare not even to be providing against it, while her enemies are growing to gigantic strength. Will any one say that additional taxes can be laid on to the amount of even one million a-year; much less to the amount of thirty or forty millions a-year, which a war would require. A war with America and France would see these Islands invaded in two months, without forty millions a-year expenditure in addition to the present. And is there any man mad enough to suppose that those forty millions could be raised in taxes in addition to the present taxes, and with present prices? Would the Government borrow again? Would

it make another string of loans? Would it get those loans in gold? Would it come back again to the paper and to high prices? Would they make another debt of eight hundred millions? And would they, at the conclusion of such war, again return to cash-payments, pass another Peel's Bill, and raise a hundred and thirty millions a year in gold, with wheat at four or five shillings a bushel?

Barely to ask these questions seriously would savour of a cracked brain; and, yet, there are men to talk, like Mr. John Smith, of paying the interest of this Debt in gold to the full amount, and not to admit the possibility of ceasing to pay; nay, and to deem it disgraceful in you, that you do not concur in the frantic doctrine. One of the best means of obviating war is to take care to be in a state that makes you not fear it. To see you ready for war is always the surest means of producing temper, prudence and patience in the adversary. Thus prepared; standing in an attitude

like this, you come to every negotiation of every sort, with advantages far superior to all those with which you can be furnished by craft and by eloquence. Your adversary looks at his man; and having measured him from head to foot, he acts accordingly. No nation fears England at the present moment; and, in every contest that we have had; in every dispute about navigation and commerce, this Debt has been a millstone about our necks; a millstone visible to all the world; a tremendous weight in the scale in favour of every one that has had a dispute with us of any description. This has been the cause of the present projects for abrogating, in part, at least, those Navigation Laws; that system of maritime management and jurisdiction which first gave us the preponderance against France. The Bills at this moment in the House of Lords, and which are about to pass into laws, are the result of vain attempts to obtain profitable commerce by negociation. We

want the money derivable from commerce; but that very want deprives us of the power of getting the commerce. Often has it been asked why we have no commercial treaty with France; why the Dutch overreach us; why the Americans take possession of the Gulf of Mexico; and actually take a step upon the West India Islands, while our Government seem stricken dumb? The answer is found in **THE DEBT**. It is written in a figure of eight and eight ciphers and posted up in Change Alley, and there it tells the King of England: "Dare "never to talk of war again as "long as I am in existence!"

It is unpleasant, it is painful in the extreme, to have to perform the duty of foreboding the downfall of one's own country; and if painful to the rest of mankind, what must it be to an Englishman, who always feels for his country, even when he does not feel for himself? Yet, this is a duty to be performed, and is imperious in proportion to the mind's convic-

tion of the fact. My wishes can avail nothing; but my sincere opinion is, that if your prayer be not heard; if the interest of this Debt be not reduced, this Nation is doomed to become one of the most contemptible upon the face of the earth. The American statesmen, I know, regard our Debt as their best security. They rejoice at its existence; and at the obstinacy of our Government in adhering to the system they have so long pursued. In France, I question not, the same sentiments prevail. But, those nations disentangled themselves from their Debts. They both took care to get rid of the crippling load; and while we are adhering to the enfeebling curse, they are growing strong by the migration to their shores of the capital, the industry and the genius of Englishmen. Great has already been this migration; but it is nothing to what we have yet to behold. Men will not remain to be crushed into the earth for the sake of Jews and Jobbers and to leave to their chil-

dren beggary and slavery as a legacy. You, Gentlemen, have done your duty: I trust your example will have an effect on others; if it have, it will rescue the country from ruin and degradation unparalleled in the history of the world, and gratitude will record that for this great benefit the nation is indebted to the County of Kent. With the greatest respect and esteem,

I am, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient

humble Servant,

W^m. COBBETT.

THE above Letter will be published next Saturday in a small pamphlet, which will be sold for *Three-pence*. It is very desirable that it should be circulated widely; that it should be got into all parts of the country and well read and digested; that it should be read by all the farmers more especially, and that, too, without de-

lay. It will therefore, for the purpose of circulation, be sold as follows:

For a thousand, 5*l*.

For five hundred, 3*l*.

For two hundred and seventy, 2*l*.

For a hundred and twenty-five, 1*l*.

Gentlemen in the country will obtain any number sent to them, carriage free, by writing to the Office of the Register, No. 183, Fleet-street, London.

THE following Letter, which was published in the Statesman London Evening Newspaper, contains some facts and remarks which it is proper should be inserted in this place. I have not, in the above Letter, mixed any of the personalities drawn forth by the unworthy conduct of the parties, because I wished the subject to stand on its intrinsic merits; but, the following Letter is nevertheless not unnecessary.—

I take this occasion of observing that the far greater part of the London Newspapers, not to say the whole of them, are wedded to, and bedded with, the Jews of Change Alley; that, as far as they circulate in the country they must do mischief to the cause of truth and of honourable dealing; and that, therefore, it is the duty of every man to narrow, as much as he can, the circulation of those papers and to encourage that of papers of a different description. I do not say this from any jobbing, rascally, money-changing motive; and if any other London paper will take the same side and show the same zeal as the Statesman, I will be the first man to express my gratitude to that paper, and to recommend it to the attention of my readers. I denounce the Morning Chronicle as being the tool of the school of Ricardo. The Courier is the slave of the Ministers, and so is the New Times. The Old Times is the slave of the Devil and the Jews, and whatever they com-

mand it will write, though it be to swear that Herod was a merciful governor, Pontius Pilate a just judge, and Judas a faithful disciple.

PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT.

To the Freeholders of the County of Kent.

Kensington, June 15, 1822.

GENTLEMEN,

THE Petition, which you agreed on, at Maidstone, last Tuesday, was presented last night, to the House of Commons; and I am now about to address you on the debate, which arose out of it, and particularly out of the *addition*, which I had the honour to propose for your adoption, and which you had the honesty, the sincerity and *good faith* to adopt.—This addition, it will be recollectcd, was in the following words:—

“ And your Petitioners, further, “ most humbly pray, that your Honourable House will be pleased “ to cause a just reduction of the “ National Debt, as soon as you “ shall have completed a Reform “ of your Honourable House.”

This debate is of the very first importance to the country. In such a case, it is very difficult for the reporters of newspapers to

give any thing like a full account of what passes. The debate occupied nearly about four hours ; and that which is inserted in the newspapers, as the report of it, does not take above a quarter of an hour in the reading. Consequently, we have but a mere sketch of it in print. On Monday, there will be inserted in THE STATESMAN as full a report as can be made out from the materials already in print and from the memory of a Gentleman who was present at the debate. You will observe, too, that the hireling part of the press, which makes up a considerable portion of it, has given the thing in as disadvantageous a way as possible towards us ; that being the wish of the caballing factions that hire it and pay it, and which factions now seem to be frightened at the apparent return of good sense to the country.

This being the case, you are not to look at the report of the debate which you will find in this paper, and which report is, as usual with evening papers, made up from the morning papers ; you are not to look upon this as a full report by any means ; and, therefore, you will not make up your minds entirely as to some parts of it, till you see the fullest report

that can be obtained. In the meanwhile, it is my duty to offer you some remarks upon it; first, as to my conduct and that of the Meeting ; and next, as to the merits of the case itself. In another and longer Address to you, which I shall publish in my *Register* of Saturday next, I intend to show, for about the thousandth time, the justice and the necessity of reducing the interest of the Debt. On the present occasion, therefore, I shall confine myself, as far as relates to this matter, to a few remarks on the miserable arguments (if such they ought to be called) that have been made use of in opposition to that part of the Petition of which I have above spoken.

As to the conduct of myself and of the Meeting.—Sir EDWARD KNATCHBULL observed that my character, as well as my conduct, was worthy of the reprobation of every honest man. He called me “*Cobbett*”, and, in one paper, it is said that he supposed he must *call me a Gentleman*, as I called myself a freeholder of Kent. KNATCHBULL calls himself a Gentleman, I suppose, and, if that be the case, the only favour I have to beg of him is, that he will not call me one.—He says that Lord DARNLEY, no

doubt, considered my character and conduct as worthy the reprobation of every honest man. I have no doubt, that this is not true; because, if you were to believe this, you must believe, that which is not to be believed, namely, that Lord DARNLEY is both a coward and a hypocrite; for you all heard him call me, not only a Gentleman but an "Honourable Gentleman;" and I trust, that his Lordship never has seen, and never will see, any thing in my character or conduct to render the words inapplicable.

But, if the proposition was of that flagitious nature which KNATCHBULL ascribes to it; if my character and conduct were such as he describes them, what a situation does he place himself in. There was he, in his own county; a cock upon his own dunghill; surrounded by scores of stanch adherents; and there was I, without having a personal knowledge of any six men in the county, offering to a County Meeting, a proposition which he thought so infamous; and yet he remained as silent as a mouse as to the *merits* of that proposition, saying nothing about it, from first to last except as to the mode in which it should be put by the Sheriff to the Meeting. There

was I, standing opposite him; he knew (or else what he now says is not true) that I was a person of justly reprobated character and conduct; he hears me make a proposition to the Meeting; he sees the Meeting adopt that proposition; he is in the midst of his constituents; and not *one single word does he say about that character or conduct*. But, Gentlemen, that would have been saying it to my face, and KNATCHBULL thought it more manly to suppress what he thought there, and to say it in the House of Commons, where he knew I should not be! If this is being a Gentleman, I hereby give KNATCHBULL notice, that if he ever call me one, I shall consider it a personal insult.

So much for him, and now to Lord CLIFTON, who said that it was impossible to tell how it was that Mr. COBBETT had obtained "an influence over the Meeting" "so as to succeed with his position." As his Lordship seems desirous to be let into a secret here; and as I scorn all disguise, he shall have the secret. In the first place, I was an utter stranger, except to about six persons; in the next place, I spoke not to a single soul before the Meeting with respect to my

intentions; in the next place, I asked nobody to second my proposition. What then, was this influence? It was the influence of a conviction in the minds of the Landlords who were not tax-eaters; of the yeomen, of the renting farmers, of the tradesmen, and even of the few labourers that were present, that, without a reduction of the interest of the National Debt, they must continue to suffer until they be totally ruined and brought to beggary.—This was the influence. The thoughts and wishes of the Meeting were put into words by me, and no merit do I claim for so doing; for that which is thought by every man, any man may easily express. Mr. BROUGHAM calls the proposition *crude*. The proposition was not, to be sure, as long as a declaration or a Bill in Chancery; but, if I am to judge from written Resolutions and other documents of the kind that have come from under his hand, he is not a man that would have been likely to propose any thing better digested, though I had not the opportunity of committing it to writing, and though it was not committed to writing, till one gentleman wrote it on a piece of paper which he held on the back of another gentleman, after I had several times repeated it to the Meeting.

One material thing, of which KNATCHBULL, Mr. HONYWOOD, and LORD CLIFTON say not a word, was this, that the proposition did not stand upon my recommendation alone. Having been opposed by Lord DARNLEY, it was supported, and most ably supported, by Mr. LARKIN, with whom, let it be observed, too, I had had no opportunity of conferring, and to whom I was an utter stranger. Mr. HONYWOOD said in the debate, that he *disapproved* of the proposition, and that he *opposed* it at the time. He must have done this in a very quiet manner; for not one man in the Meeting heard him utter one word upon the subject. Candour, however, ought to have induced him to state that Mr. FOOTE, the mover of the original Petition, actually rose and *moved* that my proposition should be a part of that Petition; that Mr. DARRELL, Jun. rose to second that motion; that Mr. RIDER, who had seconded the original Petition, also rose and seconded this motion of Mr. FOOTE; and you know well, Gentlemen, that these three Gentlemen were all in the *same waggon* with Mr. HONYWOOD, standing in company with him, he

being, in fact, one of their supporters during the day.

Mr. CALCRAFT says, that the Meeting could not have been taken by surprise; that the Members of the County were very much to blame; that if HE had been there, he should, with very little trouble, have given such a turn to the matter, as to cause the mover of the proposition to be desired by the Freeholders present, to "Take his horse and make the best of his way home." JOHN CALCRAFT, thou art what I have always known thee to be; and, thou Representative of the free and independent electors of Wareham, and thou late Clerk of the Ordnance, I hereby tell thee that (to drop the Quaker style), if you will call a County Meeting in Kent and put to that Meeting a resolution to rescind this that you call so wicked a proposition, I will meet you there *face to face*, and my real opinion is, that it is you who would have to take your horse and make the best of your way home, having only to take care that your face was towards the head, and not towards the tail, of the horse.

Now, Gentlemen, as to your conduct at this Meeting, what could be more fair, what more worthy of Englishmen? You will

recollect, that neither KNATCHBULL nor Lord DARNLEY pretended that the interest of the debt was *always* to be paid. They talked about paying as long as they could, and about ceasing to pay at a last extremity.—Even now, during this debate, none of them pretend, except the banker, JOHN SMITH, of Carrington fame and nobility; nobody else pretends that there may not arise a case such as will compel the country to cease to pay. Nay, the prime Minister himself, said, not many months ago, in the House of Lords, that, *if* a reduction were to be made in the interest of the debt, it ought to be done openly and avowedly, and not by corrupt and fraudulent means such as that of changing the standard of value. So that, there is no man, except such men as JOHN SMITH, that pretends, that even so much as pretends, that the full interest of the debt can always be paid; and yet they pretend to look upon your conduct as foolish in adopting the proposition! The question is, and this is the only question appertaining to this part of the subject. Is there a *necessity* for a reduction or is there not? It is agreed on all hands that an overwhelming necessity may come, and the question is, as Mr. WEST-

ERN fairly stated it, has this necessity arrived or has it not. What is *overwhelming*? What does that mean, as here applied? It means, covering with ruin. It is very true that those who live directly or indirectly on the taxes are not covered with ruin; but covered with the spoils of the rest of the community. It is very true that the Borough-men, whose families and dependents of all sorts are doing so well, are not covered with ruin; but if the landlords who do not live on taxes; if the yeomen, if the farmers, if the tradesmen, and the labourers of this country be not covered with ruin; then this whole nation, Irish as well as British, ought to be destroyed by fire and brimstone; for such a swarm of liars never before existed upon the face of the earth. However, they are not liars. They are covered with ruin; and unless the interest of the debt be reduced, the whole of the present race of persons of property must be reduced to beggary.

Never was, as you well know, so miserable an attempt as that which has been made to make the country believe that you were taken by surprise in this instance, and that exertion on the part of the Whig Lords would have induced you to reject the proposi-

tion. Lord CLIFTON was "prepared to admit that there was a " culpable want of spirit on the "part of the leaders." He complains of an unfavourable position that he was in at the Meeting. If his Lordship speak of bodily position, and, if he was inconveniently situated on the Sheriff's platform, surrounded by Noble and Reverend friends, and with a handrail before him, and standing in the front of the company, how unfavourable must my position have been; pressed half to a jelly in a wagon, and so closely pressed as being able with great difficulty to move hand or foot, or to stand upright. Neither does his Lordship do justice to his own father, who not only opposed the proposition, and in two speeches, too, but who said every thing upon the subject that has now been said in the House of Commons. What spirit, therefore; what want of spirit was there in the leaders? Lord CLIFTON himself spoke; but, like KNATCHBULL, only as to the manner of putting the question by the Sheriff. The fact is that his Lordship perceived the conviction of the Meeting to be such; their good sense and their *spirit* to be such, as to render all opposition hopeless.

Another circumstance of great

importance has been wholly omitted, namely, that, when I first offered myself to the Meeting, which I did not do till every body else had finished, there were some cries, and, perhaps, from scores of voices, of "off, off." Now, the persons who cried "off," still made part of the Meeting when the proposition was put; and this it is very material to bear in mind; for even these persons, who doubtless dislike me very much, and who would be ready to step a little out of the way to give me mortification; or, at least, to prevent me from obtaining so very great an honour as that which I must manifestly derive from an unanimous vote in favour of my motion; even *these* persons voted for that very motion, coming from a man that they so much disliked, and to prevent whom from opening his mouth, they had just before made such zealous efforts.

Therefore, Gentlemen, let shufflers say what they will; let men who are blind, and who wish to continue blind, say or think what they will. This was the deliberate decision of the County of Kent. There were Noblemen, Gentlemen, Clergy and Freeholders; and though there were few of the real labouring class present, there appeared to be about half a dozen

journeymen in flannel jackets and paper caps, who were very good representatives of the whole of that class. 'Tis never mentioned, in the Honourable House, that the question was twice put to the Meeting, in consequence of a misunderstanding, which KNATCHBULL perceived, or pretended to perceive, to exist. This is never mentioned; much less is it mentioned that the first time there were only *six* hands held up against the proposition, and the second time only *three*. If it had been put a third time, there would not have been one.

I have no time, Gentlemen, at present, to enter further into the subject. You have the satisfaction to know that you have given an example to the country. I claim no merit in the little that I did. The proposition was much more ably supported by Mr. LARKIN than by myself. I merely put into words that which was passing in your minds. The conduct of the Ministers, upon this occasion, has been any thing but bold. They receive the Petition, mind. The House orders it to be *printed*; and what is the reason which my Lord CASTLEREAGH gives for this? "That he is anxious to have it recorded as an instance of the feeling of Parliament upon this

" subject, with a view to warn
 " other counties from disgracing
 " themselves, by adopting the like
 " recommendations to the House." This is certainly an Irish reason, my Lord; for you record the Petition, and you record nothing else. Your Journals will tell posterity that you receive this proposition. That you caused it to be printed and put upon your Journals, and as to the rubbishing publications called Debates, who cares a straw about them? This is a droll way of discouraging other counties from following your example, Gentlemen. Mr. PEEL said that he liked the "*plain-dealing*" of Mr. COBBETT, and Sir FRANCIS BURDETT, who, as well as Mr. WESTERN, spoke out honestly upon this occasion, said, that the Right Honourable Gentleman would have a great deal of that plain dealing, which he so much admired.

I shall conclude, for the present, by just noticing the paragraph called the speech of JOHN SMITH. He is reported to have said that you adopted a nefarious proposition; that it was a great

mortification to him, that they who prided themselves on their integrity and honour to such a degree that they had a *peculiar title* on that account, should be the first body in the kingdom to Petition the House of Commons to violate the public faith, and commit the *grossest act of injustice*. You knew well that you petitioned for no such thing; but for a just reduction of the National Debt: you know that this charge against you is not true; and this debate ought to convince you that that which you did redounds greatly to your honour; that if you be the first to give this recommendation, you will be by no means the last; and it will convince the rest of the kingdom, that MEN OF KENT is not a mere empty name, but that, first in title, you are also first in honesty, sincerity and public spirit.

I am, Gentlemen,
 Your faithful Friend and
 Most obedient Servant,
 WM. COBBETT.